

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 00849 261443Z
ACTION CU-03

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y P A R A 3

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SUBJECT: FESTAC UPDATE

REF: (A) STATE 015883; (B) STATE 014268; (C) LAGOS 2077

1; SUMMARY: AT END OF FIRST FULL WEEK OF FESTAC ACTIVITIES, FEWER SERIOUS PROBLEMS HAVE DEVELOPED THAN SOME SKEPTICS PREDICTED BUT SNAFUS NONETHELESS LEGION. LAGOS TRAFFIC HAS TAKEN UNEXPECTED TURN FOR THE BETTER AS GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS ON VEHICLE USAGE HAVE WORKED. AMERICAN PARTICIPATION HAS BEEN EVEN LESS SUBSTANTIAL THAN EXPECTED WITH MOST GROUPS PERFORMING ONLY ONCE. NAZ GROUP SCHEDULED DEPART JANUARY 28 HAVING HAD "REASONABLY GOOD" TO "VERY EXCITING" EXPERIENCES. END SUMMARY.

2. AT END OF FIRST WEEK OF FESTAC, GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN OVER ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL (PARA 1, REF B) AND FESTAC NOW PROCEEDING AT SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN INITIALLY UNSATISFACTORY PACE. SCHEDULING SNAFUS RESULTING PARTLY FROM FAILURE OF SCHEDULED PERFORMERS TO ARRIVE HERE HAVE BEEN AMELIORATED BUT NOT FINALLY RESOLVED. PARTLY BECAUSE OF THIS: MOST PERFORMANCES HAVE SPARSE TURN-OUTS
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AND GOVERNMENT HAS REDUCED TICKET PRICES TO ENCOURAGE LARGER AUDIENCES. TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARTICIPANTS HAVE BEEN CHAOTIC AND FOR THE PUBLIC VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT, BUT BREAKDOWN OF MUNICIPAL FACILITIES ONCE ENVISAGED HAS NOT COME ABOUT. IN FACT, INFLUX OF VISITORS IS BARELY NOTICEABLE EXCEPT FOR FESTAC BUSES AND OTHER SPECIAL VEHICLES. ONE REASON FOR THIS IS LACK OF TOURISTS, MANY OF WHOM WERE DOUBTLESS

DISCOURAGED FROM COMING BY ADVANCE REPORTS OF PROBLEMS TO WHICH LAGOS WOULD SUBJECT THEM. GOVERNMENT DECREE RESTRICTING CIVILIAN TRAFFIC TO ODD NUMBER LICENSED PLATES ONE DAY AND EVEN NUMBERED THE NEXT HAS PRODUCED BEST TRAFFIC SITUATION IN LAGOS IN YEARS. CLOSING OF SCHOOLS ALSO HELPFUL IN THIS REGARD.

3. AMERICAN OFFICIAL CONTINGENT WHICH SCHEDULED DEPART JANUARY 28 LEAVE WITH GENERALLY POSITIVE FEELINGS. NAZ PARTICIPANTS AND PRIVATELY SPONSORED HARLEM-U.S.A. GROUP WERE HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR JANUARY 23 IN AFTERNOON INFORMAL RECEPTION FOR 300 PERSONS. MOOD OF PARTICIPANTS POSITIVE, WITH MANY EXPRESSING ENTHUSIASM FOR THE "ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME" FESTAC THRILL IN SPITE OF INCONVENIENCES AND CONFUSION THEY HAD MET.

4. MOST U.S. PERFORMERS WILL BE ON STAGE ONLY ONCE. THE FLYING SOULS, "FIRST BLACK AERIALISTS," MAY NOT PERFORM AT ALL SINCE EQUIPMENT HAS FAILED TO ARRIVE. ALTHOUGH FESTAC VILLAGE PROVIDING MORE ADEQUATE EACH DAY, ADMINISTRATIVE FLAPS STILL OCCUR. EXAMPLE IS HARLEM USA GROUP WHICH CAME FROM CCNY AND SUNY UNDER SPONSORSHIP WEALTHY NIGERIAN AND WAS ADMITTED TO VILLAGE WITHOUT CONFIRMATION BY FESTAC AUTHORITIES THAT THEY WERE AUTHORIZED VILLAGE ACCOMMODATIONS; RESULT MAY BE THAT THEIR HOST WILL PAY REGULAR TOURIST PRICES FOR THEIR ROOM AND BOARD. THIS IS ONLY ONE OF MYRIAD EXAMPLES OF FAILURE OF COMMUNICATION AND/OR COORDINATION AMONG FESTAC OFFICIALS. NAZ TRIUMPH OF SPRIGGS, SANDLER AND KING HAVE DISAPPOINTED US IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS.

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5. COLLOQUIUM HAS ENTERED "PLENARY STAGE" FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF PAPERS FIRST WEEK. SCHEDULED TO END JANUARY 30 WITH SERIES OF RESOLUTIONS. AS INDICATED REF C, US CONTRIBUTED FIVE PAPERS.

6. SOME INDICATIONS OF "REVERSE-RACISM." SEVERAL PERFORMANCES HAVE PORTRAYED WHITES DEFEATED OR KILLED BY AFRICANS. SOME ART IS IN THE SAME VEIN. GUYANA AND NIGERIA MUSICAL GROUP PERFORMANCES EXPLICITLY ANTI-WHITE. DOMINANT ELEMENT IN CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS HAS NONETHELESS BEEN REFLECTION OF SPECTACULAR VARIETY OF AFRICAN CULTURE AND HERITAGE. IN THIS CONTEXT: AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION HAS BEEN TO EXPRESS EVOLUTION OF THAT TRADITION IN PARTICULAR AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT, WITH GOSPEL SINGERS AND "AVANT GARDE" DANCERS PROVIDING COUNTERPOINT TO HEAVY DOSE OF TRADITIONAL DANCES AND SONGS BEING PRESENTED BY AFRICAN GROUPS.

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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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